

A Spirit of Shared Learning: Bringing Classroom Content Alive

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Abstract:

The curricula of Business schools accredited by the AACSB are mission driven. In the College of Business at Lamar University, the mission is the foundation of everything the college does. The Lamar College of Business mission states, among other things, that the faculty fosters a spirit of shared learning through innovative teaching, scholarly contributions, and business and community service.

Courses designed to teach outcomes related to skill building and problem solving in real world contexts offer unique opportunities for shared experiential learning. For certain content, the normal classroom environment may not be adequate, requiring faculty and students to work closer than is possible from lectures and concepts to apply the content as it is learned.

Shared experiential methods present students with decision-making practice in real-world situations. They also impact the community in the region the college serves. Students pay close attention to organizations they belong to or are familiar with.

Based on the idea of shared learning, students in an MBA course were assigned a field project to support a fledgling university organization. By applying course content, the student / instructor team was able to take the organization through the goal setting and execution process taught in the course.

In the process of applying their learning, the student / professor team had the opportunity to observe what would and would not work in a real-world setting. They realized barriers to implementing certain ideas in the real world which otherwise seemed perfect in theory. The experiential component of the course greatly enhanced student / faculty interaction and achieved the goal of shared learning.

The course was delivered in a dynamic way through videos, discussions, and hands-on application of course instruction. The shared learning method enabled the students to act as managers and execute plans to help the organization achieve its goals. Through this interactive process, the students developed competency in strategic planning, team problem solving, and business analysis. Applying what they learned in the classroom to actual situations anchored their learning and produced a high level of student engagement.

This paper, reviews the shared experiential learning experience including course content, the role of the instructor, student and client feedback, and a look at the success of the project and areas for improvement.

Attendees will be invited to explore ideas for similar approaches.